



## Fact Sheet: H1N1 Flu Vaccine and Health Care Workers

**Q. Health care workers are on the list of priority groups for H1N1 vaccine. Why can't I get vaccinated yet?**

**A. Health care workers are in the priority groups for vaccination due to the risk of infecting their high-risk patients if they are ill.** When the first doses of H1N1 vaccine arrived in the state, Maine CDC asked that certain health care workers – those with direct and frequent contact with high-risk hospitalized patients (inpatient pediatric, maternity, ICU, and emergency departments) – be vaccinated.

**Pregnant women and children – even healthy children – are disproportionately affected by H1N1. We have already had cases of healthy Maine children who have had to be hospitalized in intensive care units due to H1N1.**

Because the vaccine supply is limited and is arriving slowly, we must prioritize each shipment based on many factors, including epidemiology, risk factors, and even formulation of vaccine available.

As soon as those at highest risk are vaccinated, we plan to offer vaccine to others who are prioritized for vaccine by US CDC, including health care workers.

Once all priority groups have been vaccinated, we plan to offer vaccine to anyone who wants it; however, this may not be until early 2010.

**Q. What if I get sick before I can get vaccinated?**

**A.** Health care providers should have Continuity of Operations Plans in place during this pandemic. Antiviral treatment is available for those at high risk for complications from the flu. State-purchased antivirals are available for those who do not have adequate insurance and cannot afford the costs.

Stay home if you are sick until you are fever-free for a full 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medicine; practice good health habits by covering your coughs and sneezes, washing your hands frequently with soap and water, and avoiding touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.

### Stay informed.

Check the Thursday Weekly Updates posted at [www.maine flu.gov](http://www.maine flu.gov) for the latest information on vaccine supply, prioritization, and distribution in Maine.